MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

August 2005

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

MITIGATION DISCUSSED FOR BASS HARBOR FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Civil Works Division plans to undertake maintenance and improvement of Bass Harbor Federal Navigation project. The project includes removal of approximately 117,000 cubic yards of material by dredging and blasting. Habitat impacts include dredging 0.7 acres. To compensate for the loss of this productive intertidal habitat, NOAA Fisheries and its partner resource agencies have recommended the ACOE include, as mitigation, a project that would directly replace the lost functions and values associated with dredging mudflats. On August 17, 2005, the resource agencies met with ACOE staff and the Bass Harbor harbormaster to discuss the project and mitigation options. It was generally agreed that viable mitigation options in Bass Harbor directly replacing intertidal mudlfats are not available. However, the resource agencies were able to identify a potential mitigation site at Pretty Marsh. The project consists of replacing an undersized culvert off Indian Point Road. The existing culvert is slightly perched and greatly undersized, creating a tidal restriction that impounds water within the marsh channel upstream of the road. Replacing the culvert with one properly sized and placed will eliminate the tidal restriction, exposing tidal mudflats on a regular basis. The resource agencies felt that, although geographically far from the direct impacts, this project would meet the goals for in-kind replacement of functions and values in an ecosystem management approach. The ACOE is currently reviewing this option for feasibility and as part of the cost-benefit analysis. **(Sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)**

AUGUST 2005 DOWNEAST PROJECTS TOUR

On August 3, 2005, NOAA Fisheries, along with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the ACOE staff, coordinated a trip to Downeast Maine to review past and upcoming projects. A total of 18 site visits were conducted. By visiting these sites first hand, NOAA staff was better able to identify aquatic resources of concern, provide technical assistance, and in several projects finalize the essential fish habitat review. Since this trip was so productive, another tour is being scheduled for other parts of Maine. **(Sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)**

YEAR ONE POST-CONSTRUCTION MONITORING FOR HUBLINE COMPLETE
Algonquin and TRC presented the findings of the first year of environmental monitoring for the Hubline gas pipeline. Permit conditions for constructing the pipeline, which crosses Massachusetts Bay from Beverly to Weymouth, included a 3-5 year monitoring plan. After the 3rd year, based on results and biological triggers, further monitoring or mitigation will be required. It remains too soon to determine if specific habitats have recovered. Additional follow-up meetings will be held as data from year 2 monitoring is analyzed. **(Sean.mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)**

FISHING GEAR WORKSHOP BY FISHERMEN FOR THE NON-FISHERMEN
A workshop coordinated by UNH Sea Grant Program and sponsored by the Northeast Consortium was held on August 31 through September 2. This workshop, entitled "Fishing Gear Workshop by Fishermen for the Non-fishermen," was an industry-led educational experience focusing on common Gulf of Maine commercial fishing gears and operational practices. This workshop was an excellent opportunity to foster communication between fishermen and non-fishermen. The first day of this workshop allowed the fishermen to introduce the various gears to the participants. This included lectures on the components of each gear and techniques for adjusting the way the gear fished. The fishermen provided useful insight into fish behavior, and how they diagnose gear that is fishing inefficiently. They also discussed the various costs of different gear types and demonstrated repair techniques. Attendees were able to see and touch various gear components, which were displayed in the parking lot. The second and third day of this workshop was spent on the water. Each participant boarded a commercial trawler for one day and a gillnet vessel for the other. The captain and crew of these vessels demonstrated how their gear is deployed and retrieved. They also identified any species caught and explained the daily operations of their boats. This excellent experience provided a great opportunity to see fishing gear as it is actually used, as well as learn how fishermen manage their gear and their catch. The Sea Grant Program of UNH intends to provide similar workshops in the future. I would highly recommend all interested parties to contact the workshop coordinator: Dr Pingguo He at Pingguo.he@unh.edu or 603-862-3154. **(Marcy.Scott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281- 9108)**

JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732

NEW YORK – NEW JERSEY HARBOR DEEPENING
The New York District, ACOE recently published the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Newark Bay area of the New York and New Jersey Harbor Deepening Project to address new information that has become available since the completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the project. Since the issuance of the FEIS, Newark Bay has been designated by the EPA as a Superfund area of study due to the contiguous proximity of Newark Bay to the Diamond Alkali Superfund site on the Lower Passaic River. Newark Bay is not itself listed on the National Priority List. HCD provided comments to the ACOE on the document and will be reviewing an amendment to the document that will be issued by the ACOE in mid-September. HCD continues to work with the ACOE on this and other components of the New York-New Jersey Harbor Deepening Project. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

TITAN PDC URBAN RENEWAL, LLC
HCD has provided comments to the New York District, ACOE on a pre-construction notification for Titan PDC Urban Renewal, LLC. The applicant is seeking a nationwide permit #38 to fill 5.78 areas of estuarine intertidal wetlands and 1.53 acres of tidal waterways, including Cross Creek and Rolphs Creek, to close and to redevelop an existing landfill along the Rahway River in Carteret, Middlesex County, New Jersey. Due to the extent of the wetlands fill and the lack of a mitigation plan, HCD has requested that the ACOE take discretionary authority and require that the applicant apply for an individual permit. Several other redevelopment projects are proposed in the area by various entities including the New Jersey Turnpike Authority's Tremley Point Connector Road project across the Rahway River. The connector road project could result in an additional eight acres of wetlands loss. **(Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)**

EXELON GENERATION COMPANY, INC
Habitat staff reviewed a public notice for a project that would install a fish passage structure along the southern bank of the Schuylkill River at the Norristown Dam in Norristown and Bridgeport Boroughs, PA. A reinforced concrete structure, approximately 130 feet long and 18 feet wide, would assist the upstream migration of American shad. **(anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)**

CONOCO PHILLIPS
Habitat staff reviewed a public notice for a project that would replace Conoco Phillips' Trainer Refinery ship dock mooring facility with an improved mooring system at Marcus Hook, PA. The proposed new work would include a pile-supported concrete high-deck platform with open center, mooring cells, breasting cells, mooring dolphins, breasting dolphins, pile–supported walkway and concrete approach way, and a pile-supported access way for emergency vehicles. **(anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)**

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL
Habitat staff reviewed the proposal to mechanically dredge Assawoman Canal which connects White Creek and Little Assawoman Bay in Bethany Beach and South Bethany, DE, and to provide bank stabilization. The shoaled areas in the canal provided only 0.5 feet of water (below mean low water) in some areas and would be dredged to three feet below mean low water. **(anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)**

MILFORD FIELD OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460

OFFSHORE WIND PARK AND APPURTENANCES PROPOSED
Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) and Florida Power and Light (d/b/a Long Island Offshore Wind Park, LLC) have proposed to construct forty wind turbine generators set on individual steel tower monopiles, associated interconnecting submarine cabling, an offshore substation, and a submarine transmission cable at Long Island's south shore. In particular, the offshore turbine field would be constructed approximately 3.6 statute miles south of Jones Beach and the transmission cable ultimately would connect it to LIPA's Sterling substation in West Amityville.

In so doing, the transmission cable would traverse coastal waters including the Atlantic Ocean and Great South Bay, as well as the barrier island. Milford staff prepared comments in response to the New York District, ACOE's recent Public Notice. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

NEW YORK DISTRICT PLANS SALT MARSH RESTORATION EFFORT

The New York District, ACOE recently submitted an essential fish habitat (EFH) assessment for restoring marsh islands dominated by *Spartina* grasses in Jamaica Bay, New York. This large scale effort is intended to stem losses of intertidal vegetation that have been estimated to be taking place in the tens of acres per year. Milford staff hope to provide comments on this project in the coming weeks. Completion of coordination likely will require examination of the design plans and draft contract bidding notice in addition to materials provided thus far. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

UPCOMING STATEN ISLAND DREDGING PROJECT

The New York City Economic Development Corporation has made application to the ACOE to dredge over 80,000 cubic yards (CY) of material from the south berth of the existing pier at the Homeport Pier, Staten Island, Richmond County, New York. Certain measures would be employed during dredging to deal with decant water and related environmental quality issues. Subsequent maintenance dredging entailing up to three removals of approximately 20,000 cubic yards of material also is included in the request. All material would be placed at a suitable upland location which remains to be determined. The work will require an essential fish habitat (EFH) assessment. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

CHESAPEAKE BAY FIELD OFFICE, 410 SEVERN AVE., ANNAPOLIS, MD 06460

U.S. ROUTE 50 BRIDGE UPGRADE

The Maryland State Highway Administration is proposing to upgrade the U.S. Route 50 Bridge over Sinepuxent Bay in Worcester County. The bridge, which provides one of the three access routes to Fenwick Island and Ocean City, is of significant importance to the Maryland tourist industry. The study is an early effort to address structural and functional deficiencies that the bridge currently possesses, and which will become more significant over the next ten years. A broad range of improvements will be considered, including upgrading the existing structure, and replacement of the structure along its current and alternate alignments. The bridge crosses northern Sinepuxent Bay, which is the sole aquatic access corridor for finfish, crustaceans, marine turtles, and other marine life using Maryland's northern coastal bays (i.e., Isle of Wight Bay, Assawoman Bay, and their associated tributaries). NOAA Fisheries is currently coordinating with the Federal Highway Administration and the Baltimore District Army Corps of Engineers during the early stages of an expanded Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation, which will include preparation of a detailed EFH Assessment and Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act. **(John.Nichols@NOAA.GOV, 410/ 829-6663 regarding habitat conservation issues or Julie.Crocker@NOAA.GOV, 978/ 281-9530 regarding protected resources issues)**